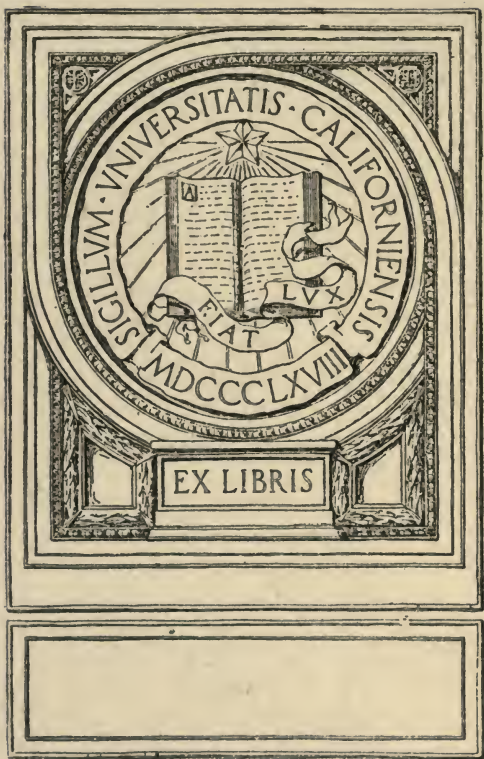


# THE BIRTH OF MORMONISM

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JOHN QUINCY ADAMS

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# THE BIRTH OF MORMONISM

BY

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS, D. D.



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## PREFACE

**I**T is not necessary to burden the reader with a history of how this book came to be written. Its genesis was a paper prepared as a contribution to local history. It has grown with the years; it has made use of sources not ordinarily accessible and possibly no longer in existence; and it is believed that it presents more completely the story of the birth of Mormonism than any publication now in print. It is sent forth with the hope that it will help to arouse the American people to endeavor more energetically to remove this moral menace to and blot upon our country—the greatest religious fraud of the nineteenth century, if not of all time.

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.

Auburn, New York, 1916.





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# The Birth of Mormonism

## CHAPTER I

### JOSEPH SMITH, JR., AND HIS GOLDEN PLATES

**I**T is perhaps necessary to remind ourselves that the closing years of the eighteenth and the first third, or more of the nineteenth century, furnished fruitful soil for religious cranks and hobbies and isms. Possibly no period in modern history has witnessed a more luxuriant growth of such products. Morality and religion were at a low ebb, or at least the latter was chiefly for fightings within if not without; for vagaries, divisions, sensations, physical and emotional, almost without number; for "the falling," "the jerking," "the rolling," and "the danc-

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ing," exercises to the glory of God; for "Pilgrims" (1817), who were led by an inspired prophet, and who made of raggedness and uncleanness a virtue, wearing their clothes unchanged as long as they would hold together; for Dylkes, "the Leatherwood God" (1828), who at an Ohio camp meeting, announced himself as the professed Messiah; for Jemimah Wilkinson, "the Universal Friend;" for William Miller and the end of the world, with proper ascension robes, and for Joseph Smith, Jr., and the Mormon Bible. This is not a complete catalogue of such movements during these years, and from such sowing we are still reaping a harvest.

Of course this religious ferment had in it good as well as evil, but when we are tempted to sigh for "the good old days" of our fathers, we would do well to quit sighing and read some history. It is thought by many now that the early settlement of this part of the "West," (Western and Central New York)

TO THE  
MORMON  
BIBLE

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consisted only of God-fearing, man-loving men and women, with children just ripe for the Sunday School book, and that in these ways they are in contrast with the settlers of the West of these degenerate days. But if contemporary chronicles are to be believed, while "grace abounded" sin "did much more abound." Mormonism was, therefore, planted in fertile soil. The climate was favorable to its growth. The people delighted in humbuggery, and Joseph Smith is one of the high-priests of the art.

"The First Church of Christ of Latter Day Saints" was organized April 6, 1830, at the house of Peter Whitmer, Fayette, Seneca County, N. Y., with six members. In the history of Mormonism this is its official birthday, corresponding to the Day of Pentecost in the Christian Church. Mormon historians describe the events of this day in glowing language. Orson Pratt subsequently figured out that it was just eighteen hundred years to

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a day since the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We shall find very often that Mormon Apostles, Priests and Prophets are surprisingly accurate in such matters!

Like Pentecost this day does not dawn without a long process of preparation. We are here largely concerned with this preparatory work. In the first place we shall tell the life story of some of those who laid the foundations and are responsible for the beginnings of what has proved to be the most virile new religion which the fertile nineteenth century produced. Then we shall consider its sacred books, their character and origin. We begin, therefore, with "the Prophet, Seer and Revelator," the first President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Joseph Smith, Jr.

Sharon, Vt., has the honor of being the place, December 23, 1805, the date, where and when Joseph Smith, Jr., first saw the light. Cannon says: "His parents were toil-



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ers, their characters were godly, and their names unstained." Well known facts, however, scarcely sustain so favorable a judgment. Both parents were of Scotch descent. His father was ignorant, lazy, of not much account—certainly not eminent for godliness, nor yet very bad. Like his illustrious son, the future "patriarch" of the Church was engaged in hunting for Captain Kidd's money—certainly not an immoral occupation—and was also charged, in company with Jack Downing, with making counterfeit money, but turned State's evidence and thus escaped punishment. Joe's mother, whom the prophet resembled, had more native wit and shrewdness than her husband, which stood her in place of "schooling." She was given to rev-eries and fortune telling, was possibly a fanatic rather than a fraud, but was a good teacher for her son. Joseph was the fourth of nine children, and his mother early decided, probably in view of his mental ability to deceive

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in which he resembled her, that he was destined for a distinguished career as a prophet, magician, fortune teller, discoverer of springs of water or gold mines, or some other equally honorable and lucrative occupation.

In 1816, the family removed to Palmyra, N. Y., and two years and a half later to the town of Manchester. Here they squatted on a small farm, built a two-roomed log house, and lived until their fortunes were improved by the new religion, and they departed for Kirtland, Ohio. The universal testimony of those who knew them at this time is that the family were a lazy, illiterate, drinking, shiftless, good-for-nothing lot, having no regular occupation, doing everything by turns, and nothing long, and living largely off their neighbors, while Joe, whose besetting sin then, as later, was lying, was considered the most worthless of them all. When he learned to read nobody knows. His favorite poetry was the thrilling stanza:



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“My name was Captain Kidd,  
As I sailed, as I sailed;  
And most wickedly I did,  
God’s laws I did forbid,  
As I sailed, as I sailed.”

If uniform tradition is to be believed, he was also an adept in robbing orchards and hen roosts, when the needs of the family required it—Joe was always kind to his family—and was very averse to any muscular exercise. Cunning apparently served him a better purpose than muscle. Tucker describes him as noted chiefly “for his indolent and vagabondish character and his habits of exaggeration and untruthfulness. . . . He could utter the most palpable exaggeration or marvellous absurdity with the utmost apparent gravity.” He was the pride of his father, “who has been heard to boast of him as the ‘genus of the family,’ quoting his own expression.” Whether this title was bestowed because of

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his prophetic gifts, or because he, more frequently than the other members, supplied the family table with the necessary things for this life, our sources do not tell. He assumed the prophetic roll quite early, and gave, as most later prophets do, oracular expositions of the book of The Revelation. Receiving his mother's approval, he secured a divining rod and went into business. He also made much use of the "Palmyra seer stone," or "peek stone," said to have been shaped like a child's foot, and to have been found, in fulfillment of Joe's prophecy, in digging a well on the premises of Mr. Chase in 1820. Certain profane authorities assert that neither the story about the find nor shape of the stone is true. Like the golden plates it long since disappeared from mortal sight. Thus was Joe qualified and trained for his future work.

During these years the Smiths made eager search for hidden wealth. Acres of ground near Palmyra, and elsewhere, were dug over,

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the other fellows as a rule doing the digging. Midnight, with a full moon was the most desirable time. Again and again they were on the verge of some great discovery, but unfortunately the diggers would harbor some impure thought, or speak a word, and at once the box of gold would sink into the ground beyond the reach of the spade, or be spirited away by angel or demon, whither only Joe knew. But no failure discouraged Joe, and no tale invented by him was too improbable to find believers. But under such discipline his prophetic powers were growing far beyond the original claims. These were the years described by Joe in his autobiography when he was 'displaying the corruption of human nature,' one of the few perfectly accurate statements ever made by the prophet.

Joseph's wanderings often kept him away from home for months, and took him to various places in this State and Pennsylvania. An interesting record of one of these

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visits was unearthed a few years ago by Bishop D. S. Tuttle in the records of a justice's court in Bainbridge, Chenango County. The story is told and documents quoted in the article on Mormonism in the Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge.

On these journeys, it is probable that Smith met some of those with whom he was later to be intimately associated, among them Sidney Rigdon and Parley P. Pratt, both of them better educated than Smith but in many ways kindred spirits.

In order not to interrupt the story of the discovery of the plates we anticipate here a little and say that Smith was married to Emma Hale, of Harmony, Pa., the daughter of respectable people who were much opposed to the match, January 18, 1827. The couple ran away and were married at Windsor, N. Y. Hale was very angry and threatened to shoot his son-in-law, but after a little was reconciled and made the best of it. In the years that

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followed the Smiths spent considerable time in Harmony at the Hale home.

In 1821, while Joe was in Palmyra, there was an extensive revival of religion in the town, and several of the Smith family professed conversion. At this time, Joe gave himself up to prayer, so he said, for many days, 'agonizing' to know the truth. Suddenly his chamber was illuminated and an angel appeared and told him that there was no true Church on earth. It is easy to prophesy now. The angel assured him that his prayers were heard, and 'he was the dearly beloved of the Lord, and should be commissioned a priest after the order of Melchisedec, organizing a church of faithful persons in that line to receive the Lord in the Millennium.' In a second visit he was further told 'that the truth should spring out of the earth;' and then, or at a later time, that the earth was the hill Cumorah, near his home. Here he would receive the holy and prophetic records which



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would complete and supplement the Christian Scriptures and enable him to establish the true church on the earth. This in brief sums up a long story as told by Joe and later Mormon authorities. Minute descriptions are given of Joe's spiritual experiences, his distress of mind, and his visions, which do not tally with the unanimous testimony of written documents and the sworn statements of those who knew him and his doings well. A decent reverence for the holy God ought to forbid the repetition of these stories, such, as for example, that the Father appeared in human form and introduced His Son, Jesus Christ, to Joseph Smith. But reverence has never been a Mormon characteristic.

It is well for us to remember also that the story of these experiences and of the great discovery was not written before 1838, when it was prepared under the direction of Sidney Rigdon, or by him. Others say positively that the story was revised from time to time, al-

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ways gaining in its miraculous and mysterious character. In fact the story of these years as told by "Ma Smith," the Prophet, and others who knew of them, varies in so many particulars, that it is difficult to determine what was the original statement, if there was an original one. The version given here is as correct probably as any of them.

In 1823, within twenty-four hours, Moroni appeared four times to Joe, repeating the same message, telling him of the golden plates, of the fulfillment of prophecy, and of his own prophetic career. There was a surplus of revelations, as was the case later in his life, and, if he had not been murdered, this fact alone would have wrecked the whole organization. Smith was also told that he must wait four years for the great disclosures, and this is supposed to be his testing time.

At length, in 1826, Joseph was in Palmyra and ready for his great work. The "golden plates" were definitely located, by revelation

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of course, in a strong box in a hill on property afterwards owned for many years by the family of Admiral Sampson. No one could look upon these plates and live, unless it was Joe. Even he, once, in digging for the box, received a violent but invisible blow from Satan, who charged him with avarice and ambition (one of the few natural touches in the story), and prevented him from securing the box. But Moroni soon after assured him of forgiveness and that he was surely chosen for this great work. Joe's stories about these appearances do not always agree, but of course a prophet can afford to be inconsistent in such small matters.

September 22, 1827, is a memorable day in this history. In the midst of a thunderstorm, some of our authorities say, Moroni came out of the hill with the box for the prophet. Praying "that he might prove faithful to his trust," Joseph removed the cover and took from their hiding place the olden



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and golden treasures. Some appropriate counsel was given to the prophet by the angel as to his new responsibilities and his duty to guard the treasure, and then "Moroni disappeared, and the Prophet of the New Dispensation stood alone upon Cumorah, clasping to his bosom priceless trust." (A Brief History, page 25.)

Joe immediately started with the box for his cabin, but, according to Mormon authorities, he had a hard time reaching it. "No sooner had he begun his homeward journey than he was assaulted by evil persons who sought his destruction." (Ibid). Three times unknown men attacked him. He reached home, however, with his precious charge unharmed, though he himself was somewhat bruised—at least so the later accounts assert. This persecution continued for some time after so that Joe was obliged to go to Pennsylvania, where he was followed by his malignant enemies.

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"Despite the attractive ingenuity of these stories," says Kennedy, "there is substantial grounds for the belief that the whole fabrication of the golden plates grew out of an impromptu jest on the part of young Smith, which was received in such earnest that his subtle cunning saw in it a new way to distinction and possible gain. The story is told plainly and fully by Peter Ingersol, a near neighbor to the Smiths, and at that time one of Joseph's most intimate friends. He declares that one day the future prophet of Mormonism called upon him, and that his countenance and manner betrayed evident enjoyment of some hidden jest. Upon being questioned, he made the following statement: 'As I was passing yesterday across the woods, after a heavy shower of rain, I found in a hollow some beautiful white sand that had been washed up by the water. I took off my frock and tied up several quarts of it and then went home. On my entering the house,

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I found the family at the table eating dinner. They were all anxious to know the contents of my frock. At that moment I happened to think of what I had heard about a history found in Canada, called the Golden Bible. To my surprise, they were credulous enough to believe what I said. Accordingly, I told them that I had received a commandment to let no one see it; for, says I, no man can see it with the naked eye and live. However, I offered to take out the book and show it to them, but they refused to see it, and left the room. Now, said Joe, I have got the d—d fools fixed, and will carry out the fun.' ” (Early Days of Mormonism, page 28-29.)

In view of certain well-known family traits, the above version, language and all, has a remarkable air of veri-similitude.

Inside the box Joe said he found “the Urim and the Thummim,” consisting of two transparent stones, clear as crystal, set in silver rims, which were to be used as instruments with

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which to translate the text. The golden plates are thus described: "They had the appearance of gold. They were about seven inches wide by eight long, and their thickness was not quite that of an ordinary sheet of tin. Egyptian characters were engraved on both sides of each plate, and the whole was bound in one volume, like the leaves of a book, closed by three clasps. Its thickness was six inches. One portion of the plate was sealed up. On those which were not sealed there were small characters skilfully cut." (Kennedy, page 34.) The sealed plates were not opened by Smith, but they wait the further pleasure of Moroni as a later revelation.

## CHAPTER II

### THE TRANSLATION

**T**HE language of the plates was called by Smith "the reformed Egyptian," but why "reformed," and why "Egyptian," no one knows, except that it was by revelation. Possibly what Joe says of the word Mormon would also apply to the name of the language; "I may safely say that the word Mormon stands independent of the learning and wisdom of this generation." This, by the way, is undoubtedly another one of the few perfectly creditable statements coming from the prophet. In a letter to *The Times and Seasons*, dated Nauvoo, May 19, 1841, Joe still further explains the word Mormon. "Before I give a definition, however, to the word, let me say, that the Bible in its widest sense, means good; for the Saviour says, according



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to the Gospel of John, 'I am the Good Shepherd;' and it will not be beyond the common use of terms to say that GOOD is among the most important in use, and though known by various names in different languages, still the meaning is the same, and is ever in opposition to bad. We say from the Saxon, good; the Dane, god; the Goth, goda; the German, gut; the Dutch, goed; the Latin, bonus; the Greek, kalos; the Hebrew, tob; and the Egyptian, mon. Hence with the addition of more, or the contraction mor, we have the word MOR-MON, which means literally more good."

Just how Mórmon's father came to know of this English word we are not informed, for it must be remembered that Mormon was the Ezra of Joe's Bible, as he compiled and wrote the volume. Mormon and twenty-three others were the last of the Nephites, and these also all perished except Moroni, Mormon's son, who lived to tell the mournful tale and to hide the plates under the hill whence

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Joe, fourteen hundred years later, obtained them. What a wonderful father Mormon must have had—or was it his mother?—who gave his son a name compounded from the “reformed Egyptian” and English language, the latter the native speech of the prophet who was not to come for many centuries. But then, anything is possible in such revelations!

We must anticipate our story a little in order to deal further with this truly wonderful language. Martin Harris, of whom more later, took an alleged copy of some of the original and of Smith’s translation to New York and submitted them to the judgment of the well-known classical scholar, Prof. Charles Anthon. In order to be an impartial historian I place side by side the account as given, supposedly by Martin Harris, and printed in “A Brief History of the Church,” etc., page 28, and Prof. Anthon’s own account of the interview. Anti-Mormons might al-

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most be willing to rest their whole case upon this exhibit.

“Being shown the characters, Prof. Charles Anthon, of Columbia College, stated, according to the account of Mr. Harris, that the translation was correct, more so than any he had before seen translated from the Egyptian. The Professor was then shown the untranslated characters, which he said were true Egyptian, Chaldaic, Assyric, and Arabic. He gave a certificate, addressed to the people of Palmyra, embodying the expressed assertions, and gave it to Mr. Harris, who folded it, placed it in his pocket, and was about to leave, when the Professor enquired how the young man learned that there were gold plates in the place where he had found them. ‘An angel of God revealed it to him,’ was the farmer’s reply. ‘Let me see that certificate,’ said the astonished Professor. Mr. Harris complied, thinking the man desired to



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add something to it, but no sooner was the paper in the Professor's hands than he tore it in pieces, saying: 'There is no such thing in these days as ministering of angels,' adding that he wished the plates brought to him and he would translate them. 'A part of the plates is sealed, and I am forbidden to bring them,' said Mr. Harris, whereupon the Professor contemptuously replied: 'I cannot read a sealed book.' And thus were fulfilled literally the words of the ancient prophet of God, as written in Isaiah 29:11." "Dr. Mitchell, another learned scholar, was consulted, and seconded all that Prof. Anthon had said concerning the characters and translations." (A Brief History of the Church, etc., page 28.)

The following is Prof. Anthon's own account of the interview, in a letter addressed to the Rev. Dr. Coit, of New Rochelle, N. Y., and first published in The Church Record:

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“NEW YORK, April 3, 1841.

*“Rev. and Dear Sir:—*

“I have often heard that the Mormons claimed me for an auxiliary, but as no one until the present time has ever requested from me a statement in writing, I have not deemed it worth while to say anything publicly on the subject. What I do know of the sect relates to some of their early movements, and, as the facts may amuse you, while they will furnish a satisfactory answer to the charge of my being a Mormon proselyte, I proceed to lay them before you in detail. Many years ago, the precise date I do not now recollect, a plain looking countryman called upon me with a letter from Dr. Samuel L. Mitchell, requesting me to examine and give my opinion upon a certain paper, marked with various characters, which the Doctor confessed he could not decipher, and which the bearer of the note was very anxious to have explained. A very brief examination of the paper convinced me

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that it was a mere hoax, and a very clumsy one, too. The characters were arranged in columns, like the Chinese mode of writing, and presented the most singular medley that I ever beheld. Greek, Hebrew, and all sorts of letters more or less distorted, either through unskilfulness or from actual design, were intermingled with sundry delineations of half-moons, stars, and other natural objects, and the whole ended in a rude representation of the Mexican zodiac. The conclusion was irresistible that some cunning fellow had prepared the paper in question for the purpose of imposing upon the countryman who brought it, and I told the man so without any hesitation. He then proceeded to give me a history of the whole affair, which convinced me that he had fallen into the hands of some sharper, while it left me in great astonishment at his own simplicity. (Dr. Anthon here repeats the story of the golden plates, as told by Smith and repeated by Harris.)

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On my telling the bearer of the paper that an attempt had been made to impose upon him and defraud him of his property, he requested me to give him my opinion in writing about the paper which he had shown to me. I did so without hesitation, partly for the man's sake and partly to let the individual behind the curtain see that his trick was discovered. The import of what I wrote was, as far as I can now recollect, simply this, that the marks in the paper appeared to be merely an imitation of various alphabetical characters, and had in my opinion no meaning at all connected with them. The countryman then took his leave, with many thanks, and with the express declaration that he would in no shape part with his farm, or embark in the speculation of printing the golden book. (Prof. Anthon here describes a second call, at a later date, and his refusal to accept a copy of the newly-published Book of Mormon, or to have anything to do with it.) That

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the Prophet aided me by his inspiration in interpreting the volume, is only one of the many amusing falsehoods which the Mormonites uttered relative to my participation in their doctrines. Of these doctrines I know nothing whatever, nor have I ever heard a single discourse from any one of their preachers, although I have often felt a strong curiosity to become an auditor, since my friends tell me that they frequently name me in their sermons, and even go so far as to say that I am alluded to in the prophecies of Scripture!

“If what I have here written shall prove of any service in opening the eyes of some of their deluded followers to the real designs of those who profess to be the Apostles of Mormonism, it will afford me a satisfaction, equalled, I have no doubt, only by that which you yourself will feel on this subject.

“I remain very respectfully and truly, your friend,

“CHARLES ANTHON.”



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Martin Harris is one of the "three" witnesses to the Book of Mormon. It is not difficult to judge of the value of his testimony after reading the above amazing statement of his interview with Prof. Anthon, written, if not told long after it occurred.

The process of translating the "reformed Egyptian" plates was simple though peculiar. It was all done with the Urim and Thummim spectacles, but it was instant death for any one but Joe to use them. Even when he put them on, the light became so dazzling that he was obliged to look through his hat. Moreover, when so engaged, no profane eyes were allowed to see him or the hat. Alone, behind a blanket stretched across the room, Joe looked into his hat and read the mystic words. David Whitmer thus describes the process; "Joseph Smith would put the seer stone into a hat, drawing it closely round his face to exclude the light, and in the darkness the spiritual light would shine. A piece of something re-

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sembling parchment would appear, and on that appeared the writing. One character at a time would appear, and under it was the interpretation in English. Brother Joseph would read off the English to Oliver Cowdery, who was the principal scribe, and when it was written down and repeated to Brother Joseph, to see if it was correct, then it would disappear and another character with the interpretation would appear. Thus the Book of Mormon was translated by the gift and power of God, and not by any power of man." (An Address to all Believers in Christ, p. 12.)

Poor Martin Harris! He was the first scribe and so continued till 116 pages had been translated. Then Martin insisted that he must have the manuscript to show to his neighbors, who said that he was a fool. Reluctantly, and as it proved, wickedly, Joe yielded, and that night Mrs. Martin deposited the paper in the stove. She did not confess to the sin at once, and Joe and Martin were

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in a serious dilemma. Easy enough to translate it again, you say? Yes, but awful thought! suppose the new translation should not agree with the first, and later the first should turn up to the dismay of the prophet and his scribe! Joe meditated upon it for months—July, 1828, to April 17, 1829—and it is needless to say that there was a decided coolness between him and Martin. Then he announced that the Lord had forbidden him to translate again the pages which were sealed up, “and thus I will confound those who have altered my words.” (See Preface to first edition of the Book of Mormon, omitted in later editions, page 48.) His mother reports him as saying when he announced the loss: ‘O my God, all is lost!’ Of course Joe lost all faith for the time being in Martin, and mother Smith says that because of his offense ‘a dense fog spread itself over his fields and blighted his crops.’ (Linn, page 43.) (Section 3, Doctrines and Covenants, is a wordy “Revela-



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tion" "concerning certain Manuscripts on the First Part of the Book of Mormon, which had been taken from the possession of Martin Harris.")

Repeated attempts were made by the wicked people of Palmyra and vicinity to steal the plates, or to have a good look at them. There is a story—quite generally believed but of course it cannot be true!—that a party of Palmyrans were taken into the room, or at least obtained entrance into it, and were shown a box within which rested the precious plates decently covered with a cloth. They were not satisfied, and with speech more vigorous than reverent, raised the cloth, and, behold, nothing but a brick was seen! Either Moroni had substituted the brick for the plates while they were talking, or else had anticipated their visit. Both explanations are given.

Most of the work of translation was done at Harmony, Pa., though it was completed

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at Fayette, where later the first church was organized.

During this time, John the Baptist appeared and ordained to the Aaronic priesthood Joseph Smith, Jr., and Oliver Cowdery, a Vermont school-teacher, well fitted to be second in this great fraud, and gave them the necessary instruction. Subsequently they each baptized the other, and then each ordained the other. Thus they secured proper credentials for their future work.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PUBLICATION OF THE BOOK OF MORMON

**B**UT if the new religion was to become known, the translation of the "Golden Plates" must be published. This took money, and at this time the Smiths had none. Later their pecuniary embarrassment was greatly relieved. Martin Harris was the only one of the group of believers who had money, and he was a lover of it. Joe worked upon his cupidity, assuring him that there was money in the venture, and further assured him that they two were about the only honest men in the world.

The Rev. John A. Clark, an Episcopal clergyman then living in Palmyra, and author of a book entitled, "Gleanings by the Way," has told the story of an interview with Martin.

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I quote from a pamphlet printed in Rochester, 1841, entitled, "The Mormons, or Knavery Exposed," etc. "It was early in the autumn of 1827, that Martin Harris called at my house in Palmyra, one morning about sunrise. His whole appearance indicated more than usual excitement, and he had scarcely passed the threshold of my dwelling before he inquired whether he could see me alone, remarking that he had a matter to communicate that he wished to be strictly confidential. Previous to this, I had had but very slight acquaintance with Mr. Harris. I had heard him spoken of as a farmer in comfortable circumstances, residing in the country a short distance from the village, and distinguished by certain peculiarities of character. He had been, if I mistake not, at one period, a member of the Methodist Church, and, subsequently, had identified himself with the Universalists. At this time, however, in his religious views, he seemed to be floating upon the sea

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of uncertainty. He had, evidently, quite an extensive knowledge of the Scriptures, and possessed a disputatious turn of mind. As I subsequently learned, Mr. Harris has always been a firm believer in dreams, and visions, and supernatural appearances, such as apparitions and ghosts, and, therefore, was a fit subject for such men as Smith and his colleagues to operate upon. On the occasion just referred to, I invited him to accompany me to my study, where, after having closed the door, he began to draw a package out of his pocket, with great and manifest caution. Suddenly, however, he stopped, and wished to know if there was any possibility of our being interrupted or overheard. When answered in the negative, he proceeded to remark that he reposed great confidence in me as a minister of Jesus Christ, and that what he had now to communicate he wished me to regard as strictly confidential. He said he verily believed that an important epoch had arrived—



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that a great flood of light was about to burst upon the world, and that the scene of divine manifestation was to be immediately around us. In explanation of what he meant, he then proceeded to remark that a Golden Bible had recently been dug from the earth, where it had been deposited for thousands of years, and that this would be found to contain such disclosures as would settle all religious controversies and speedily bring on the glorious millennium; that this mysterious book, which no human eye of the present generation had yet seen, was in the possession of Joseph Smith, Jr.; . . . that there had been a revelation made to him, by which he had discovered this sacred deposit, and two transparent stones, through which, as a sort of spectacles, he could read the Bible, although the box or ark that contained it, had not yet been opened; and that by looking through those mysterious stones, he had transcribed from one of the leaves of this book, the



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characters which Harris had so carefully wrapped in the package which he was drawing from his pocket. The whole thing appeared to me so ludicrous and puerile, that I could not refrain from telling Mr. Harris that I believed it a mere hoax got up to practice upon his credulity, or an artifice to extort from him money; for I had already, in the course of the conversation, learned that he had advanced some twenty-five dollars to Joe Smith, as a sort of premium for sharing with him in the glories and profits of this new revelation. For at this time, his mind seemed to be quite as intent upon the pecuniary advantage that would arise from the possession of the plates of solid gold of which this book was composed, as upon the spiritual light it would diffuse over the world. My intimations to him, in reference to the possible imposition that was being practised upon him, however, were indignantly repelled. He then went on to relate the particulars in regard to

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the discovery and possession of this marvelous book." The conclusion of this matter was that Harris gave his wife her portion of his goods, separated from her, and with the money raised by mortgage on the rest of his farm, agreed to pay for the first edition of the book.

In 1829, a contract was made with Mr. Egbert B. Grandin, publisher of the Palmyra Sentinel, to print 5,000 copies for \$3,000, and the job was completed in 1830. The manuscript in Cowdery's handwriting was furnished in quantity sufficient for the day's work, and at night the type was distributed and the copy returned. The original manuscript became the property of David Whitmer, and is now, or was until quite recently, in the possession of Mr. George W. Schweich, Richmond, Mo. The Salt Lake Mormons have offered large sums of money for this manuscript, it is even said \$100,000, but its owners, who do not believe in polygamy, have refused to sell it.

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Major Gilbert, the compositor, who died a few years ago in Palmyra, over ninety years of age, said the manuscript was "badly spelled, grammatically imperfect, and without punctuation." Joe told him that the angel said it must be printed as written, but the Major was equally insistent, and Joe finally yielded, or rather the angel did, and permitted many of these errors to be corrected. This work has been continued in later editions, but is not yet complete. Pity it was ever begun! Mr. Pliny T. Sexton, of Palmyra, has the proof sheets of this first edition of the Book of Mormon. On the title page, appeared this strange statement:

"BY JOSEPH SMITH, JUNIOR,  
AUTHOR AND PROPRIETOR."

Subsequently, this was changed to, "Translated by . . ."

The book created only a mild sensation, and the sale was slow. Harris had a monopoly of it, and the awful penalty of instant

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death was threatened any one who disposed of it for less than \$1.25. Then the right to sell was turned over to Smith, Sr., and he cut prices. Then Joe was informed by the angel (See Doctrines and Covenants, Sec. 19) that the whole arrangement was wrong; Martin was covetous, and after he had paid the printer, the whole outfit must be turned over to the prophet himself, who would be free from wrong motives in handling it. Immediately the finances of the Smith family improved, possibly, if tradition is to be credited, to the benefit of the neighbor's henroosts.

About a year after the completion of the translation, Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris, signed "The Testimony of the Three Witnesses" which is still printed in all copies of the Book of Mormon. The "Revelation" concerning it is given in Doctrines and Covenants, Sec. 17, where it is said, "And it is by your faith that you shall obtain a view of them, even by that faith which was

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had by the prophets of old. And after that you have obtained faith, and have seen them with your eyes, you shall testify of them, by the power of God; and this you shall do, that my servant Joseph Smith, jun., may not be destroyed, and that I may bring about my righteous purposes unto the children of men in this work." Of course after such a deliverance these men obtained a view of them by their faith, and so certify.

"Be it known unto all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come, that we, through the grace of God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, have seen the plates which contain this record, which is a record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites, their brethren, and also of the people of Jared, who came from the tower of which hath been spoken; and we also know that they have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us; wherefore we know of



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a surety that the work is true. And we also testify that we have seen the engravings which are upon the plates; and they have been shown unto us by the power of God, and not of man. And we declare with words of soberness that an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon; and it is marvellous in our eyes, nevertheless, the voice of the Lord commanded us that we should bear record of it; wherefore, to be obedient unto the commandments of God, we bear testimony of these things. And we know that if we are faithful in Christ, we shall rid our garments of the blood of all men, and be found spotless before the judgment seat of Christ, and shall dwell with him eternally in the heavens. And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen. Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, Martin Harris."



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The curious phraseology will not escape the notice of the reader, nor will the entire absence of any date, or of any description of the plates or of the manner in which they were discovered, or revealed, or shown "by the power of God and not of man." The utter unreliability of these witnesses will also be suggested when we come later to tell what manner of men they were.

Then follows the testimony of eight additional witnesses, and this spite of the fact that *Doctrines and Covenants*, Sec. 5, declares that "to none else will I grant this power," that is, "the power that they may behold and view these things as they are."

"And Also the Testimony of Eight Witnesses. Be it known unto all the nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, unto whom this work shall come, that Joseph Smith, Jr., the translator of this work, has shown unto us the plates of which hath been spoken, which have the appearance of gold; and as many of the

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leaves as the said Smith has translated, we did handle with our hands: and we also saw the engravings thereon, all of which has the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship. And this we bear record with words of soberness, that the said Smith has shown unto us, for we have seen and hefted, and know of a surety, that the said Smith has got the plates of which we have spoken. And we give our names unto the world to witness unto the world that which we have seen; and we lie not, God bearing witness of it.

Christian Whitmer,	Hiram Page,
Jacob Whitmer,	Joseph Smith, Sen.,
Peter Whitmer, Jr.,	Hyrum Smith,
John Whitmer,	Samuel H. Smith."

Once more let the reader note that there is no affidavit, no date or place attached to this "testimony." Further, no one familiar with the peculiar style of "Doctrines and Covenants," will hesitate in determining the authorship of these two declarations.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

**B**UT now that the translation was complete things moved rapidly. As already stated the First Church of Latter Day Saints was organized at the house of Peter Whitmer, Fayette, Seneca County, N. Y., April 6, 1830, with six members, namely, Joseph Smith, Jr., his brothers, Hyrum and Samuel H., Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Jr., and his brother David.

April 11, 1830, the first public meeting of the organization was held, and five Whitmers and two Pages were baptized. "On this occasion, Oliver Cowdery, under Joseph's direction, preached the first public discourse delivered by an authorized servant of God in the Latter Day Dispensation." (Brief History of the Church, p. 87.)

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On April 18, three more Whitmers and three Jollys were baptized, others later, and two or three preaching stations were established in the township.

June 1, 1830, the first Conference of the Church was held at Fayette. Thirty believers, besides many strangers, were present, and it was a wonderful day, according to Mormon authorities. A second General Conference was held in the same place September 1st, and continued for three days, and a third one January 2, 1831. During these months, Joseph Smith, Jr., Sidney Rigdon and Orson Pratt had taken up their residence in Fayette.

But many things pointed to the new West as more congenial soil for the new faith. So in October, 1830, four elders, Oliver Cowdery, Parley Pratt, Ziba Peterson and Peter Whitmer, Jr., were sent on a mission to the Indians, "a people for whose salvation Smith declared the new revelation had been largely made." They stopped at Kirtland, Ohio,

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converted Sidney Rigdon in a very sensational manner, and many others. They organized a Church there, and soon after, Joe had a revelation that Kirtland was the promised land of Mormonism, and thither in 1831 Smith and all his converts went. For that day, and in view of all the circumstances, it was an excellent location. By further revelations, settlements were soon made in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, and when driven from Kirtland in 1838, Cass and Clay counties received them. From Missouri they were obliged to flee to Illinois in 1840. They founded on the Mississippi the city of Nauvoo, which soon had 10,000 or more inhabitants, and great outward prosperity. The story of these years of growth and persecution is not in place here. The assumptions of the prophet became colossal. He was an arbitrary dictator; could always furnish a new revelation in order to accomplish his designs, whether it concerned the punishment of his



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enemies, the promotion of his friends, or plural marriages; and made well nigh unbelievable claims as to his knowledge and authority. In November, 1843, according to Riley (page 329,) he said: "I know more than all the world put together. . . . I combat the error of the ages. I meet the violence of mobs; I cope with illegal proceedings from executive authority. I cut the Gordian knot of powers, and I solve mathematical problems of Universities with truth, . . . and God is my right hand man." February 21, 1843, Joe preached a sermon of which this is a partial report from the prophet himself; "If any man (working on the Nauvoo House) is hungry let him come to me and I will feed him at my table . . . and then if the man is not satisfied I will kick his backsides. . . . This meeting was got up by the Nauvoo House committee. The Pagans, Roman Catholics, Methodists and Baptists shall have place in Nauvoo—only they must



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be ground in Joe Smith's mill. I have been in their mill . . . and those who come here must go through my smut machine, and that is my tongue." (Quoted by Linn, p. 213.)

Joe was mayor of the city, judge of its highest court, General commanding its militia, and autocrat in chief. His followers nominated him for President in 1844, after he had sent insulting letters to Clay and Calhoun, and 1,000 missionaries were sent out from Nauvoo to promote his candidacy before the National Democratic convention. One State convention, Massachusetts, met in Boston before the news of his murder reached the city, but it was broken up by rowdies and adjourned without taking action. The moral rottenness in Nauvoo during these years passed all bounds. It was indescribably vile.

When, however, Joseph and his brother, Hyrum, were murdered by the mob at Carthage, June 27, 1844, the success of the new

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religion was assured. Henceforth the prophet was a martyr; factional conflicts, which had threatened the very existence of the Church, ceased, or were suppressed by the stronger hand of Brigham Young, who never had but one revelation, and a new era in the development of Mormonism began.

Apply to Joseph Smith, Jr., whatever moral measurement you please: believe him to be, as I do, a deliberate impostor, a charlatan of the first rank, not self-deceived at least at first, though deceiving others, we must concede to him great ability. Gentile writers have not always been willing to admit this. Granted that he had able assistants in Cowdery, Rigdon, and others, Joe himself was the soul, the life of the movement. I agree with Kennedy, who says: "One cannot but admire the wonderful power of Smith in meeting each event as it came, and in fitting the circumstances of any extraordinary occurrence to his own purpose. Nothing was so unexpected

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that it could take advantage of him, and no truth so mighty that it could unhorse him or put his imagination to shame." (Page 183.)

Of course Mormon teachers themselves make everything stand or fall upon the reality of the divine mission of Smith. Says Dr. James E. Talmage, one of their authorized expositors; "The question of the divine authenticity of this man's mission is the all-important one to earnest investigators of Latter-day Saint Doctrines. If his claims to a God-given appointment be false forming as they do, the foundation of the Church of the last dispensation, the superstructure cannot be stable; if, however, his important ordination under the hands of heavenly personages be a fact, one need search no further for the cause of the phenomenal strength and growing power of the restored Church." (The Articles of Faith, a Series of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, 1899.) In

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view of the well authenticated facts which have been here stated, and much more that has been given by others on amply sufficient evidence, the reader ought to be competent to reach his own conclusion on this dilemma.

## CHAPTER V

### THE WITNESSES

**L**ET us now turn to study the lives of the three "witnesses" and some others of the early converts. To follow "the three" would be to tell in detail a large part of the history of Mormonism for its first few years.

Oliver Cowdery stands first. As we have already seen he acted as the scribe for the prophet after Harris failed and Joseph's wife, Emma, ceased to act in this capacity. Linn says: "Cowdery was a blacksmith by trade, but gave up that occupation, and, while Joe was translating in Pennsylvania, secured the place of teacher in the district where the Smiths lived, and boarded with them. They told him of the new Bible, and, according to Joe's later account, Cowdery for himself re-



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ceived a revelation of its divine character, went to Pennsylvania, and from that time was intimately connected with Joe in the translation and publication of the book." (Linn, p. 45.)

Kennedy, who more than any other writer, investigated the life and character of the three, tells a little different story, and probably the more reliable. He says that Cowdery was a Vermont school teacher, with some little education, who came West and taught school near Fayette before 1830. "Whether from a love of mental adventure, a shrewd forecast of the possibilities of the future, a real belief in the powers of Smith, or a weakness of character that led him captive by a stronger individuality, I know not; but from the first he was Smith's willing instrument and counsellor—ready to lead boldly when sent ahead, or accept the minor place if bidden to follow." He has left on record a rhetorical description of his work as a scribe which is hardly worth



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repeating. His whole history makes it evident that he was more of a partner of Smith in the fraud than his dupe.

In 1841, at Nauvoo, Cowdery for some reason seems to have fallen out with Joe, and by revelation the prophet declared that the "gifts of the Priesthood, that once were put upon him that was my servant Oliver Cowdery were taken from him" and given to William Marks, evidently a more facile instrument than the former teacher. Oliver then began the practice of law at Tiffin, Ohio, where he remained several years and expressed a desire to unite with the Methodist Church. The pastor, Rev. John Souder, and Mr. G. J. Keen, a member, waited upon him, and to them he made a full renunciation of Mormonism, but he was not willing to do so publicly, it would invite criticism and bring him into contempt. Unfortunately, the Church was content with his confession of his error at a Church meeting. While in Tiffin,

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he was faithful to his profession and became Sunday School superintendent. Then he removed to Wisconsin, where he entered into political life. At last, broken in health and spirit, he went to Richmond, Mo., where he died March 3, 1850. He rejoined the Mormons a year or two before his death, and on his death-bed is reported to have said to David Whitmer, "Brother David, be true to your testimony to the Book of Mormon."

At Richmond, Mo., January 25, 1888, where his home had been for fifty years, David Whitmer, the second of the three, died. He had been ill a long time, and a few evenings before his death he asked his physician this question: "Dr. Buchanan, I want you to say whether or not I am in my right mind before giving my dying testimony." "Yes, you are in your right mind," was the answer. Then turning to those about him he said: "Be faithful in Christ. I want to say to you all, the Bible and the record of the Nephites

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is true; so you can say that you have heard me bear my testimony on my death bed. All be faithful in Christ, and your reward will be according to your works. God bless you all. My trust is in Christ forever, world without end." (Quoted in Kennedy's *The Three Witnesses of the Book of Mormon*.) There is something pathetic in the story of this man. He was cast out of the Church by Brigham Young, lived for fifty years thereafter a blameless life, as friends and neighbors of all creeds testified, and as we have seen affirmed with his dying breath the truth of the alleged vision given nearly sixty years before that convinced him of the divine character of the Book of Mormon and of Smith as a prophet. In the closing year of his life he published a closely printed pamphlet of 75 pages, entitled, "An Address to All Believers in Christ; by a Witness to the Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon." In this he re-affirmed his testimony, and labored

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to convince the Mormons that many of the later revelations of Joseph Smith, including the one about polygamy, were not genuine.

The Whitmer family were among the earliest converts to Mormonism. Peter the father was born near Harrisburg, Pa., July 14, 1773, and died at the home of his son David, August 13, 1854. He was an uneducated Pennsylvania German, an honest and industrious citizen. He removed to Fayette, N. Y., in 1810, and was the father of one daughter and five sons, all of whom became Mormons. David, as we have seen, was one of the three, the other four sons were of the eight, while the daughter was the wife of another one of them, Hiram Page. Thus it will be seen that the testimony to the Book of Mormon comes from the Smith and Whitmer families, together with Oliver Cowdery and Martin Harris. David Whitmer was born in 1805, and came with his family to Fayette in 1810. Among the many stories about David is one told by

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the Rev. Diedrich Willers, who for more than fifty years was pastor of the German Reformed Church, Fayette, and who knew the Whitmers intimately. Smith and some of his associates had placed a wooden image in a tree in a field where one of the Whitmers was plowing, and when asked if he had seen an angel he said he had. "Then," said Smith, "this is the place where the Book of Mormon must be completed, since the angel has already appeared eleven times, and it has been revealed to me that at the place of the twelfth appearing of the angel the book must be completed." Hence the Whitmers' home became the headquarters of Smith and his friends. Other stories were current about David for many years which make it plain that he was a trustful unsuspecting, superstitious soul, easily imposed upon, the tool of Smith and not an intentional deceiver.

Martin Harris, of whom we have already written, was the third witness. He is said



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to have been by turns "a Quaker, a Universalist, a Restorationist, a Baptist, and a Presbyterian. He was also known as a violent, quarrelsome man, and used frequently to whip and kick his wife, and put her out of doors, as she herself testified. He said that he had often talked with Jesus Christ, angels and the devil, and said that Christ was the handsomest man he ever saw, and the devil looked like a jackass with very short smooth hair similar to that of a mouse. He also asserted that he had visited the moon." Linn suggests that it would have been difficult to establish his sanity in a surrogate's court.

After the removal to Kirtland, Harris became boastful and arrogant, and assumed the role of a prophet. He attempted to work miracles, had frequent and exciting conflicts with the devil, and boasted that he would renew his youth and be translated like Elijah. Poor old man! he had given his property to the Church, that is Smith, his tongue was now

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a nuisance, it was bringing discredit upon the Church, and Joe had a very effective way of taming other people's tongues whenever it was necessary for the good of the cause. In the changes from Ohio to Missouri, Martin and Joe quarrelled, and in 1837, Joe thus denounced his third witness; "There are negroes who have white skins, as well as black ones. Granny Parish and others, who acted as lackeys, such as Martin Harris. But they are so far beneath my contempt that to notice any of them would be too great a sacrifice for a gentleman to make." Harris remained for many years in Ohio, haunting the old temple, and making his living as best he could. The end is told by his son in a letter to Mr. Kennedy, dated, Louisville, Bingham County, Idaho, February 28, 1888; "Notwithstanding his prominence in the Church, and the important aid he had given it, he and the other witnesses became careless and indifferent in the Church, and actually allowed themselves

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to fall from grace, and separated themselves from it for many years." (A mild way of stating the fact that the three were excommunicated by Joe or Brigham.) "My father while separated from the Church, remained in Ohio; but, nevertheless, he always bore a true and faithful testimony of the divine origin of the Book of Mormon. He came to Salt Lake in 1870, and renewed his fellowship with the Mormon Church. He died in Clarkson, Cache County, Utah, July 10, 1875. He was ninety-two years, one month, and twenty-two days old. He bore his testimony to the truth and divinity of the Book of Mormon a short time before he departed; and the last words he uttered when he could not speak the sentence, were, 'Book, Book, Book!' "

The story of the vision granted these three men in company with Joe is too long to be told in detail. Like almost everything else connected with these early visions and revelations it was not written down till years after

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it was alleged to have happened, and exists in various versions. It is said to have occurred while they were engaged in "fervent and humble prayer" that they might receive a fulfillment of the revelation and have a view of the plates, and the answer came in the woods near Fayette. But before it was granted Joe had the revelation already mentioned promising them this vision, and of course it was soon granted.

It is then upon these men and such testimony that the immense structure of Mormonism rests. Was there ever such a colossal building erected upon such an absolutely valueless foundation? Kennedy well sums up the matter in his pamphlet already quoted; "This, then, is the testimony upon which so much has been built, around which so much of wonder, or belief, or doubt, has been clustered. How much of truth, how much of falsehood and fraud, how much of wilful deception and willing delusion, of overwrought

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imagination, of mesmeric influence, of the weaker minds ruled by the strong, of spiritual vision put forward as representing the outward eye—there may be in this, each seeker after knowledge must discover for himself—for no man within Mormonism, or without, can tell, and the four who best knew are gone into the shadows where the voice of the deceiver is hushed with that of the deceived, and from whence cometh no knowledge—either of confirmation or confession.”



## CHAPTER VI

### THE BOOK OF MORMON AND THE DOCTRINES AND COVENANTS

OUR final inquiry is regarding the contents and origin of the Book of Mormon.

According to Mormon there were three migrations from the far East to America:

1. Of Jared and his family, soon after the flood, and connected with the dispersion at the tower of Babel. 2. Of Lehi and others, of the tribe of Manasseh, from Jerusalem, when Zedekiah was king, about 600 B. C. 3. Eleven years later, of more Israelites. Both the Nephites and the Lamanites (Indians) were descendants of these last two. These two nations multiplied and peopled the land, and spent much of their time fighting one another. At length the Lamanites pre-

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vailed over the Nephites, and the latter were practically annihilated at the hill Cumorah, 200,000 of them being slain, and, as already related, Mormon surviving only long enough to complete the sacred records. The book contains, also, an account of the visit of Jesus Christ to America, soon after the resurrection, when he repeated the sermon on the mount and other of His previous instructions, and added much more, concerning baptism, church officers, etc., completing His earlier revelations, and preparing the way for the twelve American apostles and the Church of Latter Day Saints. The book contains nearly as much printer's matter as the Old Testament, and, aside from its large quotations from the Bible, all these quotations are said to be taken from the King James' version without any change—is wearisome and repetitious and puerile, not to use stronger language. Few, even among the Mormons, are said to have read it through.

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But the Bible and the Book of Mormon are not the chief sacred books of the Church. The first place is held by The Book of Doctrines and Covenants, "a book of Revelations given as necessity demanded for the comfort and guidance of the servants of God and for the Church." (Brief History of Mormonism, p. 30.) The Old Testament is for the Jewish Church, the New Testament for the Judaic and European Christian Church, the Book of Mormon for the American Christian Church, and the Book of Doctrines and Covenants for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This is the guide book of the Church. It contains the revelations granted to Joe, and one only to Brigham. It is a childish, heathenish, blasphemous hodge podge. According to David Whitmer, "after the translation of the Book of Mormon was finished, early in the spring of 1830, before April 6th, Joseph gave the stone to Oliver Cowdery and told me as well as the rest that he was through

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with it, and he did not use the stone any more.

. . . He told us that we would all have to depend on the Holy Ghost hereafter to be guided into truth and obtain the will of the Lord." (P. 32.) But Joe insisted on being the mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost, and as Whitmer further says, "Rigdon would persuade Brother Joseph to inquire of the Lord about this doctrine and that doctrine, and of course a revelation would always come just as they desired it." (P. 35.) This is Whitmer's explanation of the fall of the prophet: "We were then young in years and all of us were babes in Christ. Brother Joseph and myself were only twenty-five years of age." The poor old man has another explanation also. In connection with his mistakes in regard to the printing and sale of the first edition of the Book of Mormon, Joe had a revelation: "Some revelations are of God, some revelations are of man, and some revelations are of the devil." And so Whitmer

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rings the changes on these words as a reason for rejecting much of Joe's later revelations. Surely, Moroni took upon himself an awful responsibility in choosing such a babe as the medium for the last and highest revelations which man is to receive, when there is so much uncertainty as to the origin of revelations. One more of these revelations I must quote, it is so unique and important: "When a messenger comes, saying he has a message from God, offer him your hand, and request him to shake hands with you. If he be an angel he will do so, and you will feel his hand. . . . If it be the devil, as an angel of light; when you ask him to shake hands, he will offer you his hand and you will not feel anything. You may therefore detect him." (Doctrines and Covenants, Sec. 129. The whole section is a choice bit.)

Revelations came in other ways, even through the brothers and sisters. While at Kirtland the speaking with tongues became a



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common exercise. Any one called upon would rise and speak whatever words or sounds came to him; then another would rise and interpret the tongues. Interpreters became very expert in this business, as is illustrated by the following authentic story, told by Lieut. Gunnison: "A certain boy had become such an expert that he was called upon by the elders to interpret difficult sayings. On one occasion, when a woman arose suddenly in the meeting and called out, 'O, mela, meli, melce,' the lad was requested to reduce the exclamation to English. He promptly gave the translation, 'O, my leg, my thigh, my knee,' and even when the angry and disgusted elders had him before the council, he persisted that he had given the right translation. As the woman herself did not know what she had been aiming at, they were compelled to give him an admonition and let him go." (Kennedy, p. 117.)

But whence came this mass of bad grammar and worse history contained in the Book of

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Mormon? Is Joe Smith the author? Of course Mormons say no. "It was written," says Whitmer, "by holy men of God, who dwelt upon this land." (P. 37.) But what say the Gentiles? What says history? No absolute answer can be given. The actors who knew have all passed away, the records are defective, but reasonable certainty may be attained.

It is impossible here to do more than give a brief summary of this part of our story. Others have gathered the evidence with the greatest care. Solomon Spaulding, born in 1761, graduated from Dartmouth in 1785, ordained to the ministry and a Congregational pastor for a time, till failing health led him into business, settled at Salem (now Conneaut), Ohio, before 1812, as a partner in an iron foundry, financially ruined by the war of 1812, greatly interested in the Indians, and especially in the mounds near his home, which then and even to our own day were believed

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to be the remains of a people distinct from the Indians, wrote a romance, so called, entitled "The Manuscript Found," in which he attempted to give an account of the peopling of this continent from Jerusalem. He was very fond of his story, and often read it in whole or in part to his neighbors. There is evidence that the story contained the names Mormon, Moroni, Lamanite, Nephi, etc. Spaulding tried to get a Pittsburgh printer to publish it. It remained in his office for some time, and then Mr. Patterson declined to undertake the job. Spaulding died at Amity, Pa., 1816. His widow removed to this State, and subsequently married. The celebrated manuscript traveled with her. After the publication of the Book of Mormon, many people noted the striking resemblances between it and this Spaulding story. There is good evidence that during the preceding years Smith, Rigdon, Cowdery, and possibly others of the Mormon converts, had seen the manuscript

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or heard the story told.

Among the early professed converts to Mormonism was Dr. D. P. Hurlburt, "a man of good address and fine personal appearance." He was sent by a committee, so he represented, to ask Mrs. Spaulding's permission to take the "Manuscript Found" to Conneaut to compare it with the Book of Mormon, and, of course demonstrate that the latter had no connection with it. He was evidently familiar with the history of the manuscript. He went first to Mr. William H. Sabine, of Onondaga Valley, a celebrated lawyer and a brother of Mrs. Spaulding, now Mrs. Davison, and with whom she had lived for a time, and where Joseph Smith had worked, and secured from Mr. Sabine a letter of introduction to Mrs. Davison, containing also a request that she should comply with the request of Dr. Hurlburt. With this the doctor went to Munson, Mass., where Mrs. Davison was living with her daughter, Mrs.

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McKinstry. Both mother and daughter mistrusted him, and at first refused his request. But Hurlburt was plausible and persuaded them at last to give him a letter to Jerome Clark, Hartwick, N. Y., her former home, who had charge of her goods, to deliver into the hands of Dr. Hurlburt the manuscript of the famous story. This was done on his solemn promise to return it to Mrs. Davison. She never saw the manuscript again. Repeated requests were made of Hurlburt to return it, but he never paid the least attention to her. It was currently reported that he sold the manuscript to the Mormons in 1834, and with the proceeds purchased the farm near Fremont, Ohio, upon which he continued to reside till his death in 1882. Mrs. Ellen E. Dickinson, in her "New Light on Mormonism," relates at length an interview with Hurlburt, which she had in 1880. (See Chap. V.) The whole impression is unpleasant. Hurlburt's answers are inconsistent; he seems



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to desire to conceal the truth or to mislead concerning it, rather than tell it. Among other things he said that the manuscript he obtained from Mr. Clark was given to Mr. Howe, of Painesville, author of "Mormonism Unveiled," published in 1835, but that Howe burned it. Even here, however, he stumbled more than once. "Do you think," asked Mrs. Dickinson, "Solomon Spaulding wrote the story from which the Mormons made their book?" "Yes; and no question about it," was the answer. "Well, then, where is the manuscript?" "I think it was copied by Rigdon, and he kept the original, and Mrs. Davison had the copy." But when assured that Mrs. Davison was certain that she had the original manuscript of her husband's story, he seemed confused, made various inconsistent statements, and practically declared the interview ended.

Subsequently, Mrs. Dickinson had an interview with Mr. Howe, but it was far from

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satisfactory. She asked him, however, this question, "Do you think Spaulding wrote a story from which Rigdon and Smith made the Book of Mormon?" "Certainly, I do," was his positive answer.

Here we must rest this part of our story. The evidence seems to point to this conclusion: That the so-called historical parts of the Book of Mormon, not borrowed from Scripture, are taken from Solomon Spaulding's story, and that the borrowing, or compilation, or adaptation was chiefly done by Sidney Rigdon. Rigdon was a minister of the Disciples' Church, at least this was his standing just before he became a Mormon, an ill-balanced, conceited, extravagant character. He was a secret visitor to Joseph at Palmyra, when Mormonism was preparing. There is probable evidence that he had a copy of Spaulding's romance as early as 1823, and studied it much; that he was aware of the forthcoming new religion; expressed himself

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as dissatisfied with the faith he then had—a common condition with the early Mormons—and did much to prepare the way for his own spectacular conversion to Mormonism and for the coming of the Palmyra prophet. (For a full account of this whole question as to the relation of the Book of Mormon to Spaulding's romance, and Sidney Rigdon's part in it, see Patterson's pamphlet, "Who Wrote the Book of Mormon," Pittsburg, 1882.)

A writer in the Ohio Atlas, March 16, 1836, tells the story of his visit to Kirtland and says: "I have no doubt that Joe Smith's character is an equal compound of the impostor and the fanatic, and that Rigdon has but a small spice of the latter, with an extraordinary portion of the former." (Kennedy, p. 136.) At the conclusion of this study, I would underscore this summary of the character of the biggest impostor that America has yet produced.

The Christian people of the United States

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have yet to be awakened to the real character and design of Mormonism. Polygamy is but an incident in its infamous teachings. It is a vile, heathenish, blasphemous, despotism, without one redeeming feature. Its entire extinction presents one of the greatest problems which confronts our Christian civilization. Is twentieth century Christianity strong and wise enough to conquer it? We shall see. It must do it for the safety of republican government.

## APPENDICES

### A

#### AUTHORITIES USED IN THE PREPARATION OF "THE BIRTH OF MORMONISM"

### I

#### MORMON

1. "A Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. George Q. Cannon and Sons Co., Publishers, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1899." This was specially commended to the writer by THE DESERET NEWS.

2. "Life of Joseph Smith by George Q. Cannon," finished, as the Preface states, when the author was in the Utah Penitentiary, 1888. It is the official Life of the prophet,



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and in rhetoric and historical accuracy is hardly equal to the tales of Baron Münchhausen.

3. "The Book of Mormon," Salt Lake City, 1891.

4. "The Doctrines and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Containing the Revelations Given to Joseph Smith, Jun., The Prophet, for the Building up of the Kingdom of God in the Last Days. Divided into Verses, with References, by Orson Pratt, Sen. Salt Lake City, The Deseret News, Printers and Publishers, 1911."

5. "An Address to all Believers in Christ, by David Whitmer, Richmond, Mo., 1887." Whitmer after being expelled from the original Church founded the "Whitmerites," and this is his final defence of the Book of Mormon.

6. "Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs. By John Hyde, Jr., Formerly a Mor-

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mon Elder and Resident of Salt Lake City. New York, 1857." Placed here though by an ex-Mormon.

### II

#### GENTILE

1. "Origin and Progress of Mormonism, by Pomeroy Tucker. D. Appleton and Co., 1867." Mr. Tucker was for many years editor and proprietor of the Wayne County Sentinel, Palmyra, N. Y.; he was its editor when the first edition of the Book of Mormon was printed in his office, and read most of the proof. He knew nearly all of the early actors in the story, and had unusual opportunity for knowing the inside history. Mr. Tucker lived in Palmyra till his death at the age of 92. His book has long been out of print, but every subsequent writer has been largely indebted to it, and his statement of

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facts has in the main stood the test of time and the work of later investigators.

2. "New Light on Mormonism, by Mrs. Ellen F. Dickinson, 1885." Valuable for its study of the relation between Solomon Spaulding's story and the Book of Mormon.

3. "Who Wrote the Book of Mormon? By Robert Patterson. 1882." An out-of-print pamphlet, investigating the relation between Spaulding's story and the Book of Mormon, but altogether too dogmatic in its conclusions.

4. "The Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon. An Address before the Oneida Historical Society, Utica, N. Y., Jan. 27, 1890, by James Harrison Kennedy." Another out-of-print pamphlet, containing the fullest account of the three witnesses. It is of great value.

5. "Early Days of Mormonism, by James Harrison Kennedy, 1888." One of the best books on the subject. It adds much to Tuck-

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er's, and is better written and arranged.

6. "The Story of the Mormons. From the Date of their Origin to the Year 1901. By William Alexander Linn. 1902." The most complete, and, on the whole, the best history of the whole movement.

7. "The Founder of Mormonism. A Psychological Study of Joseph Smith, Jr., by I. Woodbridge Riley. 1902." A valuable book, but revealing at times a lack of historical thoroughness.

8. Various general histories, many newspaper, review and cyclopedia articles, the latter almost always more or less inaccurate; also certain rare papers and pamphlets, which were then owned by Dr. Charles Foster, an ex-Mormon, who knew Joseph Smith, Jr., well. Among them was a copy of *The Nauvoo Expositor*, bearing date, June 7, 1844, and the only number ever printed. During the riots which preceded Smith's murder, the office of the paper was destroyed, the types

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thrown into the street, and every copy printed upon which the Mormon authorities could lay their hand destroyed and this by order of Smith. The Church would gladly secure the very few copies still in existence. This material did not add much to the facts gathered from other sources, but they gave some local color and corroborated some facts. Dr. Foster, with his brother, also a physician, and much the older, was living at Nauvoo at the time of Smith's death, and they were directly concerned in the troubles which culminated in Smith's murder. Hyde tells the story thus; "Joseph Smith lost his life entirely through attempting to persuade a Mrs. Dr. Foster, at Nauvoo, that it was the will of God she should become his 'spiritual wife;' not to the exclusion of her husband, Dr. Foster, but only to become his in time for eternity! This nefarious offer she confessed to her husband. Some others of a similar nature were discovered and Dr. Foster, William Law, and



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others began to expose Smith. Their paper was burned, type and press demolished, for which Smith was arrested and afterwards shot, by Missourians, at Carthage, Ill." (Page 85.) The first part of this statement is probably true, for such an infamous offer was made to more than one woman in Nauvoo, but this was only a part of the trouble, and Smith would probably have lost his life if these offers had not been made. It was men from Illinois, not Missouri, who shot him. So far as the writer could learn, the Fosters were not believers in Mormonism as a religion, but they saw in it a chance for business and to make some money.

### B

#### THE NAUVOO EXPOSITOR

In the list of authorities reference has been made to THE NAUVOO EXPOSITOR. The copy which the writer was privileged to examine has since been lost. Probably there

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are not half a dozen copies of the paper in existence. It is so important in the early history of Mormonism that certain extracts and notes made when the paper was examined are thought worthy of being here preserved.

Its motto was, "The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth," and its one issue is dated, "Friday, June 7, 1844. Vol. I, No. I." Its publishers were, William Law, Wilson Law, (brothers), Charles Ivins, Francis M. Higbee, Chauncey L. Hughes, Robert D. Foster, Charles A. Foster, (brothers;) its editor Sylvester Emmons. Some of these men, as already said of the Fosters, were not believers in Mormonism as a religion, but were in it as a business proposition.

Nearly six columns of the paper were occupied with the "Preamble, Resolutions and Affidavits, of the Seceders from the Church at Nauvoo." It is wordy, verbose, grandiloquent. The Laws, with the assistance of

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Dr. R. D. Foster, were probably its authors.

They affirm their faith in Mormonism. "We all verily believe, and many of us know of a surety, that the Religion of the Latter Day Saints, as originally taught by Joseph Smith, which is contained in the Old and New Testament, Book of Covenants, and Book of Mormon, is verily true; and that the pure principles set forth in those books, are the immutable and eternal principles of heaven, and speaks a language which, when spoken in truth and virtue, sinks deep into the heart of every man." The inconsistency of this affirmation with what follows about Smith, in view of Smith's relation to this religion, will not escape the reader.

There follows a long tirade against the prophet. Some of the doctrines "taught secretly, and denied openly," are "heretical and damnable in their influence, though they find many devotees." They had appealed to Joseph, but while admitting his guilt, he would

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not make public acknowledgment of his sins; "he would rather be damned, for it would detract from his dignity, and would consequently ruin and prove the overthrow of the Church. We would ask him on the other hand, if the overthrow of the Church was not inevitable, to which he often replied, that we would all go to hell together, and convert it into a heaven, by casting the devil out; and says he, Hell is by no means the place this world of fools suppose it to be, but on the contrary, it is quite an agreeable place: to which we would make no reply, he can enjoy it if he is determined not to desist from his evil ways; but as for us, and ours, we will serve the Lord our God."

This is followed by another long account of the way in which many females, "allured by fair promises from many lands, have been brought to Nauvoo, and then under oaths the most solemn and alleged revelations from God through the prophet and others, are taught

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the doctrine of 'Spiritual Wifery' to their destruction—in words which cannot be quoted here."

The next important item in their charge is against "the attempt at political power and influence," which they characterize as "preposterous and absurd."

Among "the many items of false doctrine" which they condemn and "that are taught by the Church" is "the doctrine of many Gods." With reference to this latter doctrine, it must be remembered that in the Revelation regarding the "Plurality of Wives," "Given through Joseph, the Seer, in Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois, July 12, 1843," (see Sec. 132, Doctrines and Covenants) and which "all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same; . . . for no one can reject this covenant, and be permitted to enter into my glory;" it is asserted that those who enter into plural marriages, according to the law laid down, "shall be Gods, because



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they have no end; . . . because they have all power, and the angels are subject unto them."

The seventh resolution reads; 'That we discountenance and disapprove the attendance at houses of revelling and dancing; dram shops and theatres; verily believing that they have a tendency to lead from paths of virtue and holiness, to those of vice and debauchery.'

The affidavits of William Law and Jane his wife, and Austin Cowles, first counsellor to the president of the Church, made the 4th of May, 1844, are given, that they had read or heard read a paper by Hyrum Smith, purporting to be a revelation given through Joseph Smith, teaching "the doctrine of a plurality of wives." Again, it must be remembered that the prophet continued to deny the existence of such a revelation after the official date now given it, though the evidence is abundant that he and others were practising it.

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They have much also to say of the arbitrary and despotic rule of Smith, of the "Inquisition" that he has established, and of the risk they themselves were running of suffering his vengeance.

An editorial repudiates any intention of dealing with national politics, or taking sides with either Whig or Democrat; ridicules the pretensions of "the party in our midst," who expects "to take by storm the presidential chair;" announces that local politics will be thoroughly ventilated; advocates "a radical reform in the city of Nauvoo, as the departure from moral rectitude, and the abuse of power, have become intolerable; and asserts that they are going to fight the thing through by lawful means, and will defend themselves if force is used against them."

The editor further describes the party in power as "Heaven daring, Hell deserving, God forsaken villains."

The quotations given are sufficient to war-

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rant the statement already made that Mormonism would soon have fallen to pieces and been scattered to the four winds, if Smith and his friends had been permitted to wield their autocratic power for a while longer. But his murder stayed the process of disintegration and death.

### C

#### A CONTEMPORARY DESCRIPTION OF JOSEPH SMITH, JR.

In the Saint Louis Weekly Gazette, May 18, 1844, there appears a letter dated, Nauvoo, April 26, 1844. It thus begins; "Joseph Smith, Prophet, Priest, Prince of Mormon-dom and generalissimo of the armies of the faithful! To this high and mighty magnificate had I the honor of presentation, on the day and year first above written." The party numbered about a dozen, and after seeing the

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sights of the city were presented to the prophet. "One of our company professed himself an old and familiar friend of the general," and he acted as the chaperon of the party. "My first impression was by no means satisfactory to myself and certainly not flattering to mine host . . . Gen. Smith . . . is in stature and proportion a very large man; and his figure would probably be called a fine one, although by no means distinguished for symmetry or for grace. . . . His chest and shoulders are broad and muscular, although his arms and hands seemed never to have been developed by physical toil, and the latter are quite small for his proportions. His foot, however, is massive enough, and extensive enough, in all conscience, to make up for any deficiency in his hand. The shape of his head is a very oblong oval—the coronal region high, denoting a resolved will—the basilar and occipital full, indicating powerful impulses, and the frontal retreating although



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the region devoted by Phrenologists to the organization of the perceptive powers is unusually prominent. . . . His forehead is white, without a furrow, and, notwithstanding the small facial angle, somewhat symmetrical.

. . . His hair is quite light and fine—complexion pale—cheeks full—temperament evidently sanguine—lips thin rather than thick, and by no means indicative of boldness or decision of character. . . . But the

Prophet's most remarkable feature is his eye; not that it is very large, or very bright—very thoughtful or very restless—even very deep in its expression or location; for it is usually neither of these. . . . The hue is light

hazel, and it is shaded, and, at times, almost veiled, by the longest, thickest, light lashes you ever saw belonging to a man, whatever the facts respecting the 'dear women.' The brows are, also, light and thick—indeed, precisely of that description called beetle-brow.

The expression of the prophet's eyes when



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half closed and shaded by their long lashes, was quite as crafty as I ever beheld. . . . His voice is low and soft, and his smile which is frequent, is agreeable."

In another letter the same correspondent gives a long account of his meeting Smith's mother, who showed him the Egyptian mummies, (which is another ridiculous claim and fraud of Smith's) told him who they were, and exhibited the translations, made by her son, of the papyri found with them. He confesses that he does not know how the prophet came into the possession of these so-called "mummies." Of the translation he says; "Important and highly interesting incidents in the lives of the patriarchs of Israel and the monarchs of Hebrew history are read from these Egyptian records."

Two editorial notes; "Our correspondent at Nauvoo gives rather a minute description of Gen. Joseph Smith. Should the great Mormon ever find himself in prison-bounds—

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which he probably never will—this description of his person will save the turnkey some little trouble, if he chooses to avail himself of it, for his prison books.”

“A petition from Joseph Smith, praying Congress to allow him to raise a company of volunteers, for the protection of emigrants to the unsettled territories of the United States, was presented in the House by Mr. Semple of Illinois on the 6th. What *does* it mean?”

### D

#### ON MORAL CONDITIONS IN NAUVOO

In the preceding pages reference is made to the awful moral conditions at Nauvoo. In the Warsaw (Illinois) Signal, of Nov. 26, 1845, is a letter from C. Olney, “elder of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints,” entitled “Spiritual Wifery at Nauvoo Exposed.” He tells what he expected to find,

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and then says; "I found Nauvoo a sink of iniquity, inhabited by a people whose leaders are whoremongers. . . . And such are the men influenced by such passions, who have only to speak the word, and no crime is too horrible, no act however mean and degrading, too low for their police, as they are called, to perform in order to carry out the designs of their superiors. . . . Profane language is in common use with all classes." He speaks of the opposition on the part of the Gentiles and does not seem to wonder at it, for "I have heard prominent men as High Priests and Presiding officers say that if a Gentile comes in their way the best way to do is to put him 'out of the way' as quick as possible." Much of the letter is too plain to re-produce here. It comes from a believer in Mormonism, but reveals a depth of depravity and wickedness among the leaders at Nauvoo and the people almost beyond belief. He asserts that in the endowment house married

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people were released from their marriage vows and were allowed to decide whether they would continue in them or choose other partners.

There is much more material giving conclusive proof that the moral conditions and the conduct of the leaders of this gigantic fraud were about as bad as in any Sodom of history.







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